



# FACTS for PARENTS of PRE-TEEN GIRLS about HPV and the HPV Vaccine



## What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV is a common virus that is spread through sexual contact. Most of the time HPV has no symptoms, so people do not know they have it. There are many different strains or types of HPV. Some types can cause cervical cancer in women. Other types of HPV can cause genital warts in both males and females.

In most people, HPV goes away on its own and does not cause health problems. Experts do not know why HPV goes away in some cases, but not in others.



## How common is HPV?

About 20 million people in the U.S. are currently infected with HPV. Each year, another 6.2 million people get a new HPV infection. HPV is most common in young people who are in their late teens and early 20s.



## How common is cervical cancer?

The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2007, over 11,000 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer and about 3,600 will die from this disease in the U.S.

## What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is the first vaccine developed to prevent most cervical cancers, and genital warts. It works by protecting against the types of HPV that most commonly cause these conditions.



## Who should get the HPV vaccine?

Doctors recommend this vaccine for 11 and 12 year old girls. If your teenage daughter missed getting this vaccine when she was 11 or 12, make an appointment for her to get it now.

Ideally girls should get this vaccine before their first sexual contact when they could be exposed to HPV. This is because the vaccine prevents HPV in females who have not yet been exposed to the HPV types covered by the vaccine. It does not work as well for those who were exposed to the virus before getting the vaccine.

## Is the HPV vaccine effective?

This vaccine targets the types of HPV that most commonly cause cervical cancer and genital warts. This vaccine is highly effective in preventing these types of HPV in young women who have not been exposed to them before getting the vaccine. The vaccine does not treat existing HPV infections or the diseases they may cause.

## Is the HPV vaccine safe?

The vaccine has been licensed as safe. This vaccine has been studied in thousands of girls and women in the U.S. and around the world. These studies have shown no serious side effects. The most common side effect is soreness where the shot is given (in the arm).

**For more information on vaccines, ask your child's healthcare provider or call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) Website: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/preteen/)**



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